



Victorian-era homes in Old Louisville (left) contrast with a Waterfront Park Place condo (top right) overlooking the Ohio River and downtown. Center: Mayor Jerry Abramson at Waterfront Park. Bottom right: Julien Robson, the Speed Art Museum's curator of contemporary art, with Peter Morrin, director.

# Artful Living

South meets North and Midwest, art meets commerce, and city meets parkland to create a place to call home.

by **Bruce Allar**

Maybe it's because Louisville is poised on the border between North and South as well as South and Midwest, accepting and hospitable to all. Or perhaps it's because there are so few celebrities to speak of living in this mid-sized city, with the possible exception of media-genic basketball coach Rick Pitino and Jerry Abramson, who is commonly called the "mayor for life." Whatever the combination of factors, this Ohio River town is characterized by openness rather than privilege, and that makes it a rewarding place to live and visit.

"The quality of life here is pretty terrific," says Stephen Klein, who took over nearly two years ago as president of the Kentucky Center, the area's main performing arts venue. "It may be because it's smaller and it has a touch of the South, but there's a grace and charm about Louisville. It's a very livable, manageable place."

Klein's career has taken him to New York, Denver, Pittsburgh, and other stops, but like many who transplant to small-town-big-city Louisville, he's impressed that in a community this easy to navigate there are so many places

really worth a look-see. The arts scene tops his list. Pointing out how unusual it is for a metro area of one million to have five major performing arts groups — an orchestra, opera, ballet, theater, and children's theater — Klein also applauds the groups' willingness to mount ambitious, at times cutting-edge, programming. "In some ways, this town is more accepting of the 'new' than some other places I've been," he says.

Actors Theatre of Louisville's annual Humana Festival of New American Plays, still vital after 31 years, grabs the



Louisville's skyline may look like this rendering by 2010, when Museum Plaza (tall towers at right) is completed.



© REX, COURTESY OF AURALAB

spotlight of the American stage every March and April. Visual art and artists are finding Louisville an increasingly accommodating locale. The venerable Speed Art Museum helped spark a movement when, in 2000, it brought in Julien Robson as its first curator of contemporary art. By exhibiting new artists — some of them local — and purchasing their works, Robson and the museum have cast exposure on a scene that is now brightened by a bustling downtown gallery district and a movement in art glass, with three major studios and a new University of Louisville art program dedicated to glassblowing.

Being smaller helps communication, says Peter Morrin, director at the Speed. “With the size of this city, we’re able to collaborate,” he adds, noting the synergy of his institution in Old Louisville with the New Center for Contemporary Art and the 21c Museum Hotel, which are both downtown. “Some galleries have taken risks and shown works that aren’t ‘saleable’ — experimental quilts, video art, avant-garde exhibits that stimulate young artists.”

The face of contemporary Louisville is best seen at 21c and its conjoining restaurant, Proof on Main, where new-millennium art and patrons combine in an intriguing cosmopolitan mix. A number of other meeting places are contributing to the revitalization of the city’s downtown and riverfront — among them the green space at Waterfront Park and minor-league ballpark Louisville Slugger Field. A boom in downtown residential development promises to transform this commuter town into a 24-hour city.

Emblematic of the trend is the 62-

story Museum Plaza development project scheduled for completion on West Main Street in 2010. Estimated at \$465 million (most supplied in private dollars from a local development team), it is a work of art itself featuring a trio of glass towers and an “island” floating among them 22 stories in the air. It will be the tallest building in Kentucky and several surrounding states, says one of its developers, Steve Poe. The striking structure will contain 98 luxury condominiums, more than 270,000 square feet of office space, 250 hotel rooms, and a 40,000-square-foot contemporary art museum on the elevated island.

“We developers came to the conclusion that what was really needed was mixed-use with a residential component,” Poe says, “making it a place where art meets commerce and there is 24-hour activity.”

Poe is also involved in RiverPark Place, a mixed-use development in the works along the river at Waterfront Park. With 1,500 condo units — plus restaurants, shops, a marina, and other facilities — RiverPark is designed to draw young professionals and empty-nesters into Louisville’s evolving urban landscape. “I think downtown development has hit a critical mass,” says Poe. “Pre-sales at RiverPark Place topped \$35 million in the first three months” of 2007, he says, with some of them occupying a waiting list started in June 2006.

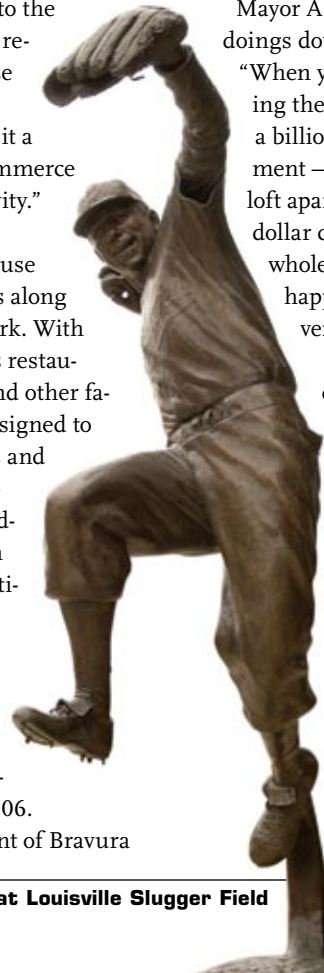
Jim Walters is president of Bravura

Corp. His firm designed many of Louisville’s newest buildings, such as the Kentucky Center, the Humana Waterside building, and Waterfront Park Place, which Walters says was the first new condominium building downtown, featuring 76 luxury suites from 1,200 square feet to 7,000 square feet overlooking the Ohio River. Waterfront Park Place, completed in 2004, “appeals to a diverse group of people” as a “high-energy place to live,” Walters says. Many windows afford “fantastic views of the city and river. . . . The design of this building is very unique, and people respond to that.”

Mayor Abramson explains the doings downtown this way:

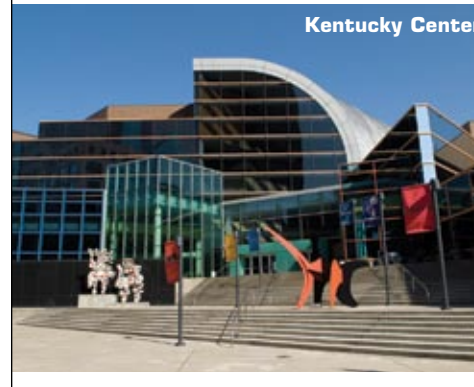
“When you spend 20 years planting the seeds, you begin to see a billion dollars of new investment — new restaurants, new loft apartments, new million-dollar condos, a new arena. The whole renaissance of what’s happening downtown is very exciting.”

Change downtown contrasts with the stability of Louisville’s neighborhoods, which are often cited as evidence that this is a great place to raise a family. Residents take time for idle chat at groceries, banks, on the street, and across their front yards. It’s a small-town feel, says Melissa Mershon, director of Metro Government’s Department of Neigh-



A statue of Harold “Pee Wee” Reese at Louisville Slugger Field

Kentucky Center



borhoods. “It lets you live in a metro area of one million people but also lets you feel like you know your next-door neighbor,” she says.

Victorian-era homes in Old Louisville preserve one era of the city’s history, while early 20th-century streetcar-suburb mansions near Cherokee Park showcase another. The city’s parks system is a point of pride. Master 19th-century landscaper Frederick Law Olmsted and his firm laid out the key properties inside the old city limits, which remain vital more than 100 years later as sources of respite and recreation. Now, a new City of Parks initiative for all of Jefferson County, which merged with the city into one government in 2003, will add a ring of interconnected green spaces in rapidly suburbanizing areas along the outlying boundaries of the county. Already well on their way to complete funding, these efforts promise to keep Louisville on the map as a poster city for parks development.

Mentioning a planned 100-mile cycling loop tracing the county’s extremities, three or four parks at approximately 500 acres apiece, and canoe launches for residents wanting to paddle in nearby Floyds Fork Creek, Abramson notes, “The largest parks expansion project anywhere in the United States is something that plays a role in our enhanced quality of life.”

The connection the parks represent between a pastoral past and green future sums up a great deal of Louisville’s appeal. “It’s more about enjoying life than hustle,” says Speed Art Museum’s Morrin, “and that’s what makes this such an attractive place to live.”

**For over 80 years,  
some of the world’s best  
engineers have been designed,  
built and tested right here.**



UNIVERSITY of LOUISVILLE

J.B. Speed School of Engineering

[speed.louisville.edu](http://speed.louisville.edu)

**BITTNER'S**

*Designing for the way you live.*

LOUISVILLE'S CUSTOM FURNITURE AND  
RESTORATION SPECIALIST

731 East Main Street, Louisville, KY 40202  
502.584.6349 [www.bittners.com](http://www.bittners.com)



## LOUISVILLE SCORES

Most casual sports fans know that picturesque horse farms in the Bluegrass area serve as the womb for thoroughbred racing, and that the world focuses on Churchill Downs in Louisville's South End each May for the Kentucky Derby. They also probably realize that college hoops is the region's religion. What's lesser known is the emergence of Louisville on several other fields of competition.

In college football, the University of Louisville's team finished in the top ten nationally last year after a victory in the Orange Bowl. The team is poised to make a championship run in 2007, powered by the arm of its pro-prospect quarterback, Brian Brohm. Golf hit it big in the city when the Jack Nicklaus-designed Valhalla Golf Club hosted the 1996 and 2000 PGA Championships, the latter won in a thrilling playoff by Tiger Woods. The course, now owned by PGA of America, also hosted the 2004 Senior PGA Championship and will be the site of the

2008 Ryder Cup. Baseball got a boost with the opening in 2000 of Louisville Slugger Field, a minor-league park near the Ohio River downtown and home to the Louisville Bats, top Cincinnati Reds affiliate.

Also downtown: Louisville Extreme Park, one of the nation's best skate parks complete with a 24-foot full pipe.

The Greater Louisville Sports Commission has made some big scores of late to add to the city's sports-centric identity. In 2007, the city has hosted or will host, among other events, professional beach volleyball's AVP Crocs Tour (last month), Olympics-style competition in the National Senior Games (June 22 through July 7), and the Ford Ironman Louisville Triathlon (August 26), a qualifying event for October's big kahuna in Hawaii. The Ironman

event has been signed for five consecutive years; pro volleyball will be back in 2008, with a possible extension.

The commission's executive director, Diane McGraw — widow of former big-league pitcher Tug McGraw — assumed control of the nonprofit this year after sports-promotion stints in Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Orlando. "The first thing that hit me is, this town exudes sports," says McGraw. "I couldn't get over the involvement everyone here has." — *BA*



Louisville Extreme Park

COURTESY OF THE GREATER LOUISVILLE CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

## NATIVE

**Ed Hamilton**

Sculptor; Louisville resident since early childhood



**Why did you stay in Louisville even though your art is nationally recognized?**

I like the art movement that's going on and being a part of that community. It's been nice to raise children here, and it's a lot cheaper to live here than it is in New York. There's a part of me that wanted to leave here to build an art career early on, but then I decided that . . . if you do good work, it doesn't matter where you are. They'll find you — and that proved to be the case.

**Where is the first place you'd take guests from out of town?**

I'd take them down on the Belvedere (plaza that overlooks the Ohio River) to see the "York" that I created (*laughs*). Then I'd take them up through the gallery row and the art glass places on Market and Main streets. Then we'd go down to Proof on Main and have us a drink and just chill out. If time permits, we'd see the museums — either the Speed Art Museum or the Ali Center.

## NEWCOMER

**Marc Masterson**

Artistic Director, Actors Theatre of Louisville; moved from Pittsburgh in August 2000



COURTESY OF HARLAN TAYLOR

**What surprised you about the city when you moved here?**

I noticed most of all how the downtown has changed over the 15 years or so that I've known Louisville. There's been a lot of positive change downtown and I think it's accelerated in the last six or seven years. It seems fresh and exciting.

**Describe Louisville for someone who hasn't experienced it.**

It's a place between both the North and the South and the East and the West. At that place where Louisville is, in a transition point, there's energy, and that energy expresses itself in sometimes surprising ways.

There are a number of things that this city has either founded or created that are definitions of excellence that can't be matched anywhere in the world, and they're quirky in a way, by other people's standards — horse racing and bourbon, baseball bats and hand surgery, and theater, of all things. They give the city some bragging rights.

— *Interviews by Bruce Allar*



When in the bluegrass,  
spend the night with red penguins.

Stay in the luxurious rooms of the 21c Museum Hotel for amenities you won't find anywhere else, from contemporary art to iPods with customized playlists, as well as 500-thread-count Egyptian cotton sheets and 42" plasma TVs. Find us under the red penguins next to the award-winning restaurant, Proof on Main.



**Museum Hotel**  
700 W. Main Street  
Louisville, Kentucky  
502.217.6300  
21cmuseumhotel.com



Waterfront Park Place, Louisville, Kentucky

Right where you want to be.

Downtown Louisville is alive with possibility and Waterfront Park Place is sitting at the heart of it's booming urban landscape. As a staple in the city's skyline, the only high-rise luxury condominium has award winning architecture, first class amenities that do more for owners than pamper and please. Within walking distance of major sporting events, museums, shopping, entertainment, and premier dining, our residents are right where they want to be, at the center of it all.

**Waterfront Park Place**

Luxury Condominiums  
Louisville, Kentucky

502.569.0533

www.waterfrontparkplace.com



## WHAT'S HAPPENING

### JUNE

**8-9: Clarksville Heritage Festival.** Falls of the Ohio State Park, Clarksville, Indiana. fallsoftheohio.org

**19: The Best of Photography and Film, George Eastman House Collection.** Speed Art Museum through September 16. speedmuseum.org

**20: Kentucky Shakespeare Festival.** Free performances held in Old Louisville's Central Park through July 15. kyshakes.org

**22: Summer National Senior Games.** Senior Olympics at the Kentucky Expo Center, University of Louisville, and in parks throughout the city, through July 7. 2007seniorgames.com

**24: The Taste of Frankfort Avenue.** Sample food from Frankfort Avenue restaurants. Held in the Clifton Center. cliftoncenter.org

### JULY

**3-4: Waterfront Independence Festival.** Held on the Great Lawn. 800-626-5646

**27-28: Kentucky Music Weekend.** Free folk festival, the largest in Kentucky. Held at the Iroquois Amphitheater. kentuckymusicweekend.com

### AUGUST

**3-4: Kentucky Bluegrass Music Festival.** One of the country's largest bluegrass festivals. Held at Riverfront Plaza/Belvedere. 502-583-0333

**16-26: Kentucky State Fair.** At Kentucky Exposition Center. kystatefair.org

**24-25: Kentucky Heartland Festival.** At Freeman Lake Park in Elizabethtown, Indiana. 270-765-4334

### SEPTEMBER

**29-30: Captain's Quarters Regatta and Art Fair.** Sailing event on the Ohio River. saillouisville.org

### OCTOBER

**5-7: St. James Court Art Show.** Oldest and largest art show, award-winning. stjamescourtartshow.com  
— Compiled by Martha-Page Ransdell

## 12 THINGS TO SEE AND DO

### IN LOUISVILLE:

**1) Belle of Louisville.** The Belle is the oldest operating river steamboat in the country. 502-574-2992; belleoflouisville.org

**2) Fourth Street Live.** Downtown shopping and restaurants. 4thstlive.com

**3) Gallery Hops.** Transit Authority of River City free trolleys to galleries, restaurants, and attractions downtown the first Friday of the month and the last Friday of the month on Frankfort Avenue. 502-585-1234; ridetarc.org/trolleys.asp

**4) Kentucky Derby Museum.** Trace the history of the Run for the Roses. 502-637-1111; derbymuseum.org

**5) Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft.** The best Kentucky-created quilts, sculpture, clay pieces, and more. 502-589-0102; kentuckyarts.org

**6) Louisville Science Center.** For all ages. 502-561-6100; louisvillescience.org

**7) Louisville Zoo.** Spring brought a host of baby animals to the zoo.

502-459-2181; louisvillezoo.org

**8) Six Flags Kentucky Kingdom.** Popular theme park for all ages. 502-366-2231; sixflags.com/kentuckykingdom

### NEARBY:

**9) Caesars Indiana,** Elizabeth, Indiana. Caesar's offers more than 100 gambling tables, 2,000 slot machines, restaurants, and shopping. 812-969-6000; harrahs.com

**10) Derby Dinner Playhouse,** Clarksville, Indiana. Dinner is included with your play. 812-288-8281; derbydinner.com

**11) Huber's Orchard and Winery,** Starlight, Indiana. One of several wineries in the Indiana Uplands Wine Trail. 812-923-9463; huberwinery.com

**12) Schimpff's Confectionary,** Jeffersonville, Indiana. Old-fashioned candy shop and museum. 812-283-8367; schimpffs.com

— Compiled by Robyn Davis Sekula

simply prepared.

OYSTER BAR

Z'S

STEAK HOUSE

elegantly served.

Founder, Mehrzad Sharbaiani

2005/2006/2007 America's Top 10 Seafood Houses

LUNCH: Monday - Friday / DINNER: Monday - Sunday

101 WHITTINGTON PKWY  
LOUISVILLE, KY 40222  
t: 502-429-8000 f: 502-339-0335  
WWW.ZOYSTERBAR.COM

NEW INDIANAPOLIS LOCATION  
OPENING AUGUST 2007

# FIRST IMPRESSIONS

At the University of Louisville,

★ UofL ranks **FIRST** among major research universities in NIH funding growth.

★ Two UofL researchers were on the team that discovered the world's **FIRST** 100% effective cervical cancer vaccine.

★ A young boy recently became the **FIRST** paralyzed patient to walk as a result of therapy at Frazier Rehab Institute and UofL's Kentucky Spinal Cord Injury Research Center. The therapy was designed and directed by a UofL neurosurgery professor.

★ UofL's \$1 million Grawemeyer Awards program was the **FIRST** created by a university to honor outstanding ideas and works in music composition, religion, education, psychology and political science.

★ US News and World Report ranks our College of Business in the **FIRST** 10% of all U.S. business schools.

★ The world's **FIRST** three successful hand transplants and the **FIRST** implantation of the Abiocr™ artificial heart were performed by UofL-Jewish Hospital teams.

★ UofL's School of Dentistry is the **FIRST** in Kentucky and one of only 16 in the U.S. with a prosthodontics clinic to help patients disfigured by cancer, trauma and birth defects.

★ UofL is home to the **FIRST** NIH-funded center for studying how pollution affects the heart.

★ A UofL engineering alumnus headed the team that created the **FIRST** artificial playing surface, known today as Astroturf®.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

For more UofL firsts, go to:

[www.louisville.edu/firsts](http://www.louisville.edu/firsts)

UNIVERSITY of LOUISVILLE

The University of Louisville is an equal opportunity institution.

we realize your **FIRST** impression of us might be based on our football Cardinals, who earned our **FIRST** Big East Championship in 2006, leading to our **FIRST** Orange Bowl title in 2007. We'd like to take a moment to introduce you to a few of our other famous firsts.

